

## Home Safety

### Meeting Objectives

To emphasize that many workplace safety principles and practices also apply to the home, where a large percentage of accidents happen. The result should be greater understanding of the importance of making safety a way of life.

### Introduction/Overview

As we all know by now, there are many potential dangers in the workplace for those who haven't learned to identify hazards and prevent accidents.

But more people die and are injured in accidents at home than at work. Over 20,000 people die in home accidents every year, and about a third of all injuries occur at home. Like accidents on the job, most of these can be prevented by knowing where the risks lie and taking some steps to reduce those risks and promote safety.

Today we're going to look at some of the common types of home accidents and what you can do to prevent them. You'll see that the safety practices that will protect you and your family at home are not much different from those we follow here. Since you're probably the "safety expert" in your family, I hope you'll be able to share some of your knowledge so that everyone in your home will be better able to prevent accidents.

### General Hazards

The largest number of serious accidents at home result from:

•	Falls
•	Fires
•	Drowning
•	Poisoning
•	Faulty electrical connections.

### Identifying hazards

Other common accidents are caused by improper use of tools and appliances-just as they are at work.

How safe is your home? Try a "hazard audit," and involve everyone who lives with you. You will not only be able to identify hazards, but point out that they are hazards to those who haven't had safety training.

You'll receive a checklist at the end of this session that should be helpful for your audit.

## Protection Against Hazards

Let's look at the hazard categories one at a time and see what you can do to prevent accidents.

If you're like most people, there are numerous places to fall or trip where you live. You can prevent most of these-and certainly the most serious ones-by following these rules:

- Keep floors, and especially halls and stairs, free of clutter. Don't stack magazines, tools, laundry, toys or other items on the floor and certainly not on steps.
- Make sure stairways are well lit.
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- Check that all stairs, including those to the basement, have sturdy railings. Tack
- down any loose pieces of carpet or linoleum.
- Use nonskid mats or decals in bathtubs or showers.

## Fires

Home fires are a scary thing, but the invention of smoke detectors makes it a lot more likely that if there is a fire, you'll get out in one piece.

Install smoke detectors on every floor of your house, including the basement and attic. Check their batteries regularly to make sure they're working.

Hopefully you can prevent those smoke detectors from ever being used by applying your knowledge of fire safety.

For instance, most people have a lot of flammable liquids and chemicals at home: gasolines, kerosene, paint thinner, etc. But I'll bet most of you are not nearly as careful with those liquids as you are with the ones at work.

- Store flammable liquids and chemicals in tight, labeled containers away from heat and electricity. Where possible, keep gasoline and similar substances in a separate garage or storage building.
- Use oil-based paints only in well-ventilated areas with no ignition sources-including cigarettes.

- Put dry rags soaked with flammable liquids outside or dispose of them in closed containers.

Electrical fires are also common at home. To prevent them, remember:

- Check wires to make sure insulation is intact.
- Don't overload circuits; that can be a particular danger if you have an overabundance of appliances in the kitchen.
- Don't run cords under rugs.

Homes are full of ignition sources and things that can bum, so keep these cautions in mind, too:

- Use a fireplace screen and clean the chimney yearly.
- Keep kerosene heaters away from burnable material.
- Only use kerosene, not gasoline, in a kerosene heater and fill it only when the heater is cool.
- Don't smoke around flammable liquids or anywhere there could be flammable vapors. Don't smoke in bed.
- Don't tuck in electric blankets or pile things on top of them.
- Turn pot handles away from the stove edge and other burners.

Alert everyone in your household to the types of things that can cause fire and develop a plan for what you will do if there is a fire.

- Post fire department number next to all phones-you should also have the police, ambulance, and poison control center numbers there.
- Develop an evacuation plan. If you have children, you may want to stage a few practice drills.
- Have working fire extinguishers and test them periodically.
- Teach everyone what to do if their clothes catch on fire: STOP, DROP, and ROLL.

## Poisoning

Another cause of at-home accidents is poisoning. That's not surprising when you consider the number of hazardous chemicals that exist in the average home. As you know, exposure to

hazardous chemicals can cause many different short- and long-term health problems.

Take a look at the items in your kitchen, bathroom, garage, etc. You'll probably be amazed at the number of hazard warnings they contain.

While most of them are really not a great danger if used properly, many people assume that if it's sold in a store it's safe no matter what. They don't even read the labels. Children, especially those not old enough to read, are especially at risk.

While there is no hazard communication standard that applies at home, the combination of labels and common sense should help you prevent this type of accident. Here are some suggestions:

- Read labels on all household cleaners, paints, garden supplies, etc., and follow their recommendations for use, storage, and clean-up.
- Store cleaning solutions, pesticides, and other hazardous chemicals in places where children can't reach them.
- Keep containers closed when not in use.
- Dispose of old, used, or unlabeled substances carefully. You don't want them getting into your water or getting into the wrong hands. Many towns have hazardous materials collection days, and they're the best bet for disposing of these items.

Some people, again especially children, are poisoned by medicines. So keep them stored out of reach in childproof containers. If they're past their expiration dates, get rid of them carefully.

## Drowning

Anyone who owns a swimming pool worries about drowning. Remember that people can drown in small above-ground pools as well as in the large in-ground variety. So if you have a pool, make sure everyone knows how to swim and follow these precautions:

- Never let anyone swim alone.
- Never let anyone swim when they're tired or have used drugs or alcohol. Fence in the pool and keep it locked when no one's there.
- Cover the pool when it's not in use.
- Learn CPR, so if there is an accident you'll be able to act quickly.

## Electrical Problems

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There are numerous ways that electricity can cause accidents at home: overloads, improper connections, wiring that's in poor condition, or contact between electrical items and metal or water. As you know, metal and water are conductors and can cause shock or even electrocution.

Here are some electrical safety tips that are especially important in the home:

- Make sure circuits aren't overloaded.
- Match the plug to the outlet.
- Check insulation on cords and wires.
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- Don't use extension cords unless you have to. Use
- 
- outdoor electric cords for outdoor uses.
- Keep electric appliances away from water and don't use them with wet hands. This is especially important for those who use electric razors, hair dryers, and similar items in the bathroom, and cooks who may tend to an appliance with one hand and run water with the other.
- Use GFCI outlets in the bathroom.
- Don't touch an electrical appliance with anything metal. For instance, don't try to take toast out of the toaster with a fork.
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- Unplug electric appliances and tools when they're not being used.
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- Don't use an electric appliance that sparks, smokes, or otherwise demonstrates that there's something wrong.

## **Home Shops**

Many of you probably have tools at home, and I'll bet you don't follow the same precautions you use with tools here. Well, you should. Here are a few reminders:

- Read instructions on tools and machinery before you use them.
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- Choose the right tool for the job. Keep
- 
- tools in good working condition.
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- Keep your work area neat and the floor clear.
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- Turn off and unplug tools and machines before making repairs or adjustments.
- Use protective clothing. You need safety goggles when you're using things like saws and

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chain saws, and gloves and sturdy shoes for almost any task. Don't wear loose clothing or jewelry that could get caught in machinery, and watch out for long hair, too. If you're using very loud equipment, invest in a pair of earplugs or ear coverings.

## Safety Procedures

As you can see, the safety procedures we follow here are just as important at home. There are a few other general principles you should keep in mind, too.

- Plan your jobs; think about potential hazards and how to prevent them from becoming dangerous.
- Be prepared; know how you'll handle an emergency.
- Don't overdo it; know your own physical limits and beware of heat stroke, pulled or strained muscles, and general overexertion.
- Practice safe lifting. Your back can go out just as easily lifting a piece of furniture as it can lifting boxes at work. Save your back.
- Think safety. If it can become second nature at work, it can become second nature in the rest of your life, too.

## Suggested Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of accidents are most likely to happen at home?
2. What are some of the important ways to prevent fires or reduce the risk of anyone getting hurt in a fire?
3. What kinds of flammable liquids and chemicals do you have at home? How should they be stored?
4. What kinds of hazardous chemicals do you have at home? How can you reduce their hazards?
5. What are some of the electrical dangers at home? How can they be prevented?
6. What are some of the falling and tripping dangers at home? How can they be prevented?
7. What kinds of safety practices should you use when you're working with tools and machinery at home?
8. Are there any other questions?

## Wrap-Up

Life is not a series of disasters around every corner, but accidents do happen. This company has put a lot of time and effort into providing you with the information and training you need to stay safe at work. We can't follow you home to make you use what you've learned there, but we can try to convince you it's a good idea.

A lot of safety is just being alert and using common sense. Apply what you know about hazards and safety at home, and share what you know with the people you care about. That's the best way to prevent accidents and keep everyone safe and healthy.

## **Sample Handout**

### **Home Safety Checklist**

#### **Trips, Slips, and Falls**

- 0 Keep floors, halls, and stairs clear.
- 0 Provide good lighting on all stairways.
- 0 Have sturdy railings on all stairs.
- 0 Tack down loose carpet or linoleum.
- 0 Use nonskid mats or decals in bathtubs or showers.

#### **Fires**

- 0 Have smoke detectors on each floor, including basement and attic.
- 0 smoke detector batteries regularly.
- 0 Have at least one fire extinguisher and check it regularly.
- 0 Store flammable liquids and chemicals in tight, labeled containers away from heat and electricity, preferably outside the house.
- 0 Use oil-based paints only in ventilated areas with no ignition sources.
- 0 Dry rags soaked with flammable materials outside or dispose of them in closed containers.
- 0 Make sure all wiring insulation is in good condition.
- 0 Don't overload circuits.
- 0 Don't run cords under rugs.
- 0 Use a screen on a fireplace and clean the chimney yearly.
- 0 Keep kerosene heaters away from burnables.
- 0 Use only kerosene in a kerosene heater and fill it only when the heater is cool.
- 0 Don't smoke around flammable liquids or anywhere there could be flammable vapors.
- 0 Don't smoke in bed.
- 0 Don't tuck in electric blankets or pile things on top of them.
- 0 Turn pot handles away from the stove edge and other burners.
- 0 Post fire, police, ambulance, and poison control center phone numbers next to each phone.
- 0 Develop and practice a fire evacuation plan.
- 0 Teach everyone in your home what to do if clothing catches fire: STOP, DROP, AND ROLL.

#### **Poisoning**

- 0 Read labels on all household cleaners, paints, garden supplies, etc., and follow their recommendations for use and storage.
- 0 Store cleaning solutions, pesticides, and other hazardous chemicals in places where children can't reach them.

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- 0 Keep containers closed when not in use.
- 0 Dispose of old, used, or unlabeled substances carefully and properly, preferably on community hazardous materials collection days.
- 0 Keep medicines in childproof containers out of children's reach.
- 0 Dispose of outdated medicines properly.

### **Drowning**

- 0 Never let anyone swim alone.
- 0 Never let anyone swim when they're tired or have used drugs or alcohol.
- 0 Fence in the pool and keep it locked when no one's there.
- 0 Cover the pool when it's not in use.
- 0 Learn CPR.

### **Electrical Problems**

- 0 Don't overload circuits.
- 0 Match the plug to the outlet.
- 0 Check insulation on cords and wires.
- 0 Don't use extension cords unless you have to.
- 0 Use outdoor electric cords for outdoor uses.
- 0 Keep electric appliances away from water and don't use them with wet hands.
- 0 Use GFCI outlets in the bathroom.
- 0 Don't touch an electrical appliance with anything metal.
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